

MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

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*The only UK magazine dedicated to
vintage coin-operated amusement machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Published by: Antique Automatic Amusements
Editor: Jerry Chattenton

10 Bedford Road
Dartford DA1 1SR
☎07710 285360
e-mail jerry.mmm@tiscali.co.uk
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Editorial

Hello again – it's been a while, hasn't it? Yes, this really is the March magazine, and yes, we are now heading towards the end of May. I fully accept that the magazine is always late, but this one has certainly surpassed all previous lateness. Many of you will be aware of the reason for this, and for those who are not, here it is.....

On the evening of Friday 14th February (ironically the day I posted out the Feb. Magazines), the south of England was hit by a monumentally ferocious storm. It was the Southwest that bore the brunt of the unprecedented winter storms and flooding that hit the country, almost relentlessly, from last December through to February. However, on this occasion the entire south of England was on the receiving end of what was probably the worst (and fortunately the last) storm of the winter. Unfortunately (or perhaps I should say tragically), my arcade in Brighton was seriously trashed by the storm. So, as I am sure you will all understand, since then the magazine hasn't been very high up on my list of priorities.

AFTER THE STORM

I have to admit that I was a little nervous during that Friday evening, with Brighton never far from my mind. Even living some fifty miles from the south coast, the storm here at home was particularly violent. In the aftermath of the storm, there were many homes and businesses much further inland that lost roofs, fences, trees fallen onto cars etc., so it must have been horrendous on the coast. I just hoped that the steel flood barrier that I have at the entrance to the arcade would be enough to keep out the sea, should it reach that far.

I hadn't intended opening at Brighton on the Saturday, as the weather was forecast to be wet, windy and generally miserable. However, at about 10.00 in the morning, I received a call from Carl, who runs the café next door to me at Brighton. He wasn't overly specific, but said I should get down as soon as possible as there had been some damage. I was obviously very apprehensive as I drove down to Brighton that morning, not knowing what I was going to find. But not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined the absolute carnage that would greet me when I arrived.

continued on following page.....

Front Cover picture: *Jamiesons sweet payout Rotolite, the only known example.*
See Stuart's story on page 12.

I parked the van at the top of the ramp that leads down to the lower esplanade, where my arcade is situated. The police had cordoned-off the ramp, preventing the public from venturing down to the beach, which now covered the entire esplanade – there was no walkway, just beach. When I got to the arcade, I didn't have to unlock the roller shutter to inspect inside.....because there wasn't one! The wind had completely blown in the shutter, thus exposing the arcade to everything that could possibly be thrown at it – wind, rain, sea, beach.

The floor was hidden below five inches of water and machines had just been uplifted and scattered around like driftwood. Fortunately, most of the wall machines were relatively undamaged, simply because they were screwed to the walls. Floor-standing machines hadn't fared so well though, with a few being totally wrecked. There were two centre-piece machine stands, each supporting six wall machines, that had been 'blown' to the side, one also toppled over.....and I don't believe four strong men could have lifted either of these an inch off the ground.

Having wasted over an hour just looking at the wreckage that used to be a penny arcade, I determined that above all else I needed to make the premises secure, which was easier said than done. I had no tools or materials, and even if I had had a vanload of power tools they would have been of no use as there was no power. I eventually drove off to the nearest B&Q and brought back some shuttering ply and two-inch nails (I had plenty of wood screws at the arcade, but they were of no use as I couldn't drill holes). I did the best I could, but it wasn't brilliant. The following day, Sharron came down with me, and whilst she tirelessly bailed-out the water with a bucket, I made a better job of boarding-up the gaping great hole where the shutter used to be.

And so the clear-up began – and boy, did it take some time. Even a couple of weeks after the storm, I still intended getting the March magazine out fairly early in the month, as in the Feb. issue (if you can remember back that far) I had announced that we hoped to be running an auction sometime in May. If the auction was to go ahead (and at this point, I still intended that it should), then the March and April magazines would have to be out on time, as the date would need to be confirmed in the March issue and the entry forms included in the April issue. However, as the days rolled on, it became clear that the monumental task of getting the arcade up and running again had to be the priority.

My time was fairly evenly split between working on site, making repairs to the arcade at Brighton, and repairing and re-building machines at home. Without being overly optimistic, I had hoped to be ready to open again for the school Easter holidays, but there were just not enough hours in the day or days in the week, and it didn't happen. However, I did just about manage to get open for the Easter weekend.

But it wasn't over! There was still tons of work to be done (and still is), just to get back to the way things were before the storm. One of my biggest problems was that all my signage was wrecked and needed to be completely re-made. I've already built new top boards to go above the entrance, which have been very nicely sign-written, but there is still much to do.

There are still many machines that require considerable work; one in particular will need to be completely rebuilt. At this point, I should like to thank a couple of good friends, who between them were able to lend me half a dozen machines. With these machines I've been able to fill up the arcade to about what it was before.

And so it goes on (and on and on.....), but I am at least open. So if you're visiting the south coast over the summer months, do please come to Brighton and pop into the arcade. More particularly, please spend some money, because I desperately need it! I am open weekends and school holidays, and if you haven't visited before, Mechanical Memories is situated at beach level about 100 yards west of the pier.

SPRING AUCTION (CANCELLED)!

OK, so there won't be an auction in May as we had planned, but I can at least reveal the reason for the proposed event. We will be offering what is without doubt the finest collection of Bryans machines ever to come to market. We had intended including half of the collection in the May auction and the remaining half in November. Obviously, the first half will now be offered in November and the remainder probably in the spring of next year.

So, more about the collection. The vendor has been a personal friend of mine for many years, so I am of course familiar with the collection; indeed, I was with him on various occasions when he acquired the machines. Excluding 'the big stuff', like cranes, pendulum etc., almost every machine Bryans ever produced is included. Every machine has been meticulously restored back to pristine condition, using only genuine Bryans parts, artwork etc.

I have posted pictures of all the machines on the pennymachines site. They can be found in the Auction forum under the heading '*The Most Impressive Bryans Collection to be offered ever.*' They are also featured on Darren Hesketh's double DVD set '*The old time Penny Arcade and the Vintage Fairground.*' There will of course be more details nearer the time of the auction, but in the meantime, start saving your pennies as this will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire some truly stunning and rare Bryans machines.

Well, that's just about it for now – my longest editorial ever! I hope to be able to get the April magazine out in a couple of weeks, so I will hopefully have caught up in a couple of months.

Until next time, all the best

Jerry

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update March 2014

PROJECT UP-DATE

Third month into 2014 and the project is progressing well. All landscape and ecological surveys have now been completed. Tenders for the initial works are being evaluated by our partners, Thanet District Council, and we anticipate an appointment at the end of March. Meanwhile, the council has put out a call for interest to tender for the design and build of the amusement park exterior and interior spaces.

A contractor for the design and build of the Scenic Railway trains is being finalised and the council is in the process of drawing up the contract. Meanwhile the specification for the second package of works is being drawn up for the design and build of the Scenic Railway, associated buildings and railway station. A call out for expressions of interest to restore the Corbière Wheel and Junior Whip has been released by the council.



The ex Blackpool Pleasure Beach Junior Whip.

Dreamland's Junior Whip is the last surviving original in the UK. The Junior Whip opened at Blackpool Pleasure Beach in 1927 as the Fairy Whip. It was believed to have been originally located in Bingle & Bob's, the children's park set up that same year between the Jack 'n Jill Slide and the Scenic Railway. In 1934, the ride was moved to Emberton's Kiddies Park where it was located immediately south of the Zipper Dipper. It operated until 2008, in recent years as Griffin's Magic Dragon, and in 2009 it was dismantled and moved to Dreamland Margate.

The Corbière Wheel is the creation of French engineer, Henri Corbière, built around 1956. This veteran Ferris Wheel is the only ride in the world to have a spherical motion. In other words the whole wheel revolves around its base as its gondolas travel in a spiral path describing a sphere through space. Now in its golden age this state of the art design had its passengers spellbound by the unique sensation of its double action.



The Corbière Wheel, the last surviving wheel of its type.

DREAMLAND VISITOR AND LEARNING CENTRE

We are full steam ahead at Dreamland HQ planning and designing Dreamland's vintage arcade style visitor & learning centre in the Grade II*-listed cinema building's disused seafront amusement arcade.

Our local community were the instigators for raising funds to open a visitor & learning centre. Businesses, national artists and the people of Margate came together and raised over £25k from a celebrity art auction, open day and vintage vehicle rally.

Due to the neglected condition of the building and associated services, handed over to the council last September, a new temporary power and water supply system needs to be put into place to commence works. The project design has allowed for the provision of new services to the entire site with the Stage 1 works – provision of these is taking slightly longer than anticipated, but we understand we'll have full access and utilities soon and will be ready to open this spring.

Meanwhile, we are selecting content and activities for the arcade to create an immersive exhibition describing Dreamland's rich heritage, the project and future plans whilst evoking the atmosphere of Dreamland and vintage amusement arcade culture. We'll announce the opening date shortly.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are delighted to announce that we have two opportunities coming end of this month and beyond. Firstly we are looking for people with carpentry, painting and decorating skills to help us prepare the Visitor & Learning Centre Arcade due to open this spring and secondly...

We are looking to recruit a flock of Dreamland Guardians to help run the Visitor & Learning Centre Arcade from spring 2014 – spring 2015 acting as:

- Front of House
- Ambassadors
- Invigilators
- Tour guides
- Archive collators

Training, handbook, per diems and free tickets to our 2014 events and activities are all part of the Dreamland volunteer package - plus lots of fun!

If you'd like to join the Dreamland community in please email volunteers@dreamlandmargate.co.uk.

ACADEMIC STUDY

This time of year always brings forward an avalanche of academic and creative inquiry from students and tutors who have been inspired by Dreamland and its many themes from the science of amusement park planning to fine art, architecture, social history, heritage, regeneration and the performing arts.

So, it's no wonder that this year, likely to be the last year we see Dreamland in its current defunct condition, demand for access to the amusement park, its environs, designs, archive and the project team is greater than ever.

With approximately seventy students engaged from Canterbury School of Architecture, University for the Creative Arts foundation course and University for the Creative Arts fine art department, Canterbury Christ Church University performing arts department and Canterbury Christ Church photograph department, we look forward to seeing the outcomes and exhibiting some of the resulting work in the Visitor & Learning Centre Arcade later this year.

MARGATE ON THE RUN

The Dreamland Trust met with the Fred Perry design team in Margate last year who were looking for inspiration for a 2014 Spring/Summer capsule collection. The collection coincides with this year's 50th anniversary of the infamous 1964 Whitsun weekend youth clash on Margate sands. For over 50 years mods, skinheads and scooter boys made the weekend pilgrimage to Margate marking their cultural territory and expressing their identity through music and fashion.

In the early 1980s scooter lover and illustrator Paddy Smith began producing and selling commemorative 'weekender' patches. The hand-printed designs, exclusively available at each event, began to be worn as medals – proof of attendance. Each patch was unique to that weekender and the design told a story about the date and destination. This season, six exclusive patches have been designed by Paddy Smith and are applied to a series of Fred Perry styles, illustrating the enduring relationship between the Laurel Wreath and British subcultures. Each patch celebrates a unique element of the weekenders and one patch pays tribute to the rejuvenation of Margate's iconic Dreamland. The full collection will be available in all Fred Perry Authentic shops and now online at www.fredperry.com

Nick Laister (Chairman, The Dreamland Trust)

www.dreamlandmargate.com
www.savedreamland.co.uk

Louisa's Fairground Life and Beyond

by Louisa M Prestney

In 1931, while her father was minding the coconut stall at Mitcham Fair, Louisa Prestney was born in a caravan by the village pond. Her parents and grandparents were show people, touring southern England with their fairground stalls and entertainments. The fairground life was in their blood, and for Louisa it was the same. It was a hard life, but it was work she loved.

Now Louisa is retired and settled down, and her fairground life from the 1930s to the 1970s seems a million years from the world of today.

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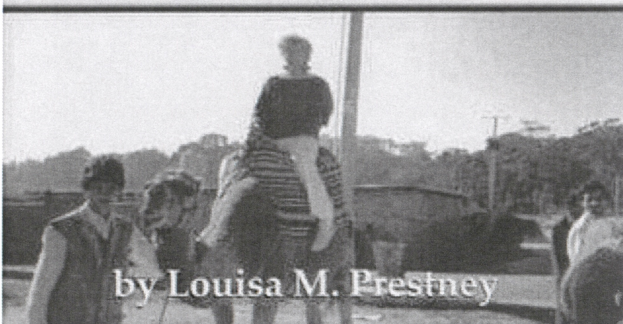
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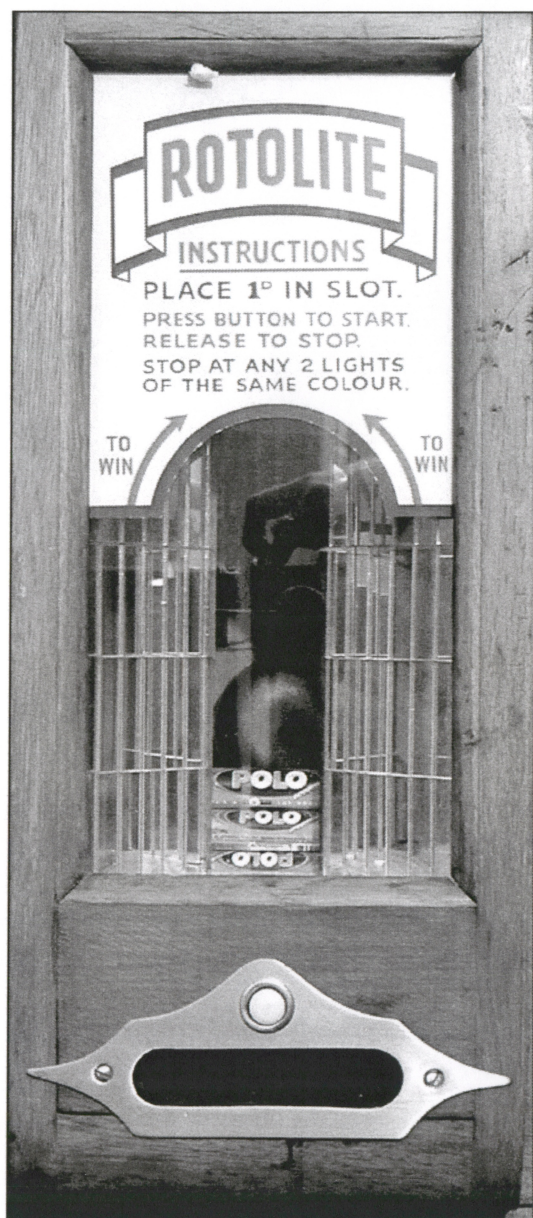


Louisa's Fairground Life and Beyond



by Louisa M. Prestney

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A Rotolite with a Difference

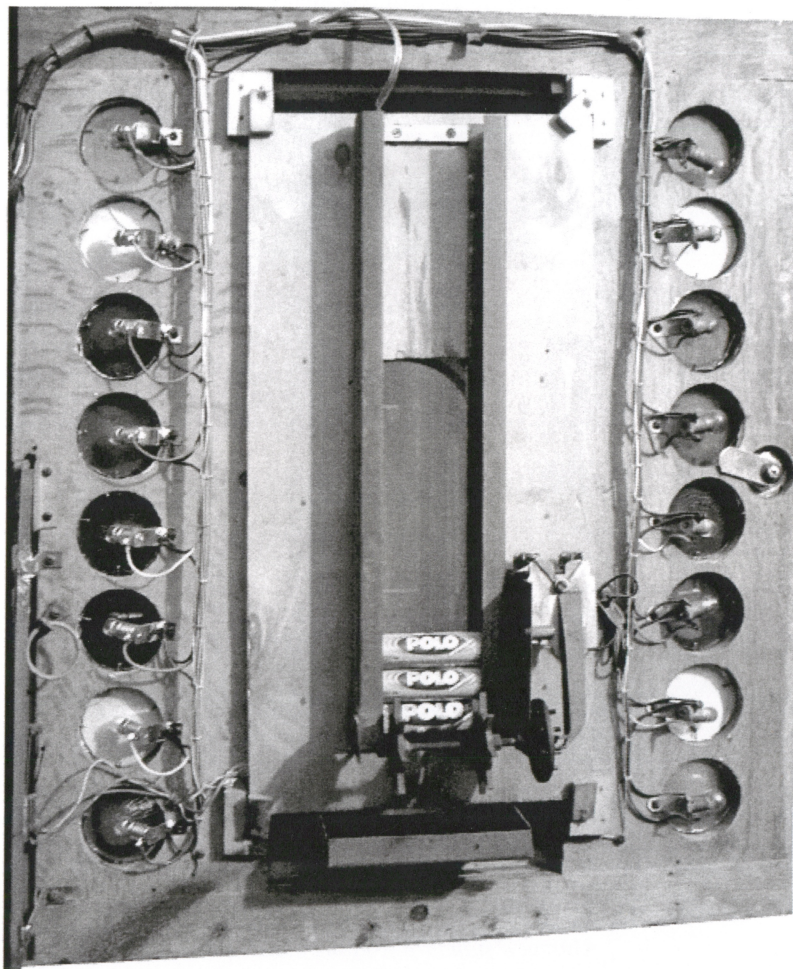
By Stuart Dale

I feel sure that most of the regular readers of this lovely little publication will at some time have seen or even played on one of Jamieson's **Rotolite** machines, like the one in this photo; indeed I am lucky enough to have one in my own collection. But just to show you that there are still a lot of lost machines out there that time has forgotten, I was very fortunate to cross paths with a very rare version of the Rotolite that I had never seen before. And after some negotiation and a bit of running around, it too is now in my collection.



*Above, a standard Rotolite machine.
Opposite page, detail of Stuart's newly acquired sweet payout Rotolite.*

When I first saw the photos of this machine, my thoughts were that it must have been converted to a sweetie payout by an operator. But once I got the machine home and into the workshop, I could see no signs of it ever being altered in any way. Everything was where it should be, with no spare or filled holes, which are the usual signs that a machine has been 'messed' with over the years. Even Ian Jamieson said that he had never seen one before, and the best he could think was that it had been made to special order?



The rear of the door, showing the allwin-style sweet dispenser.

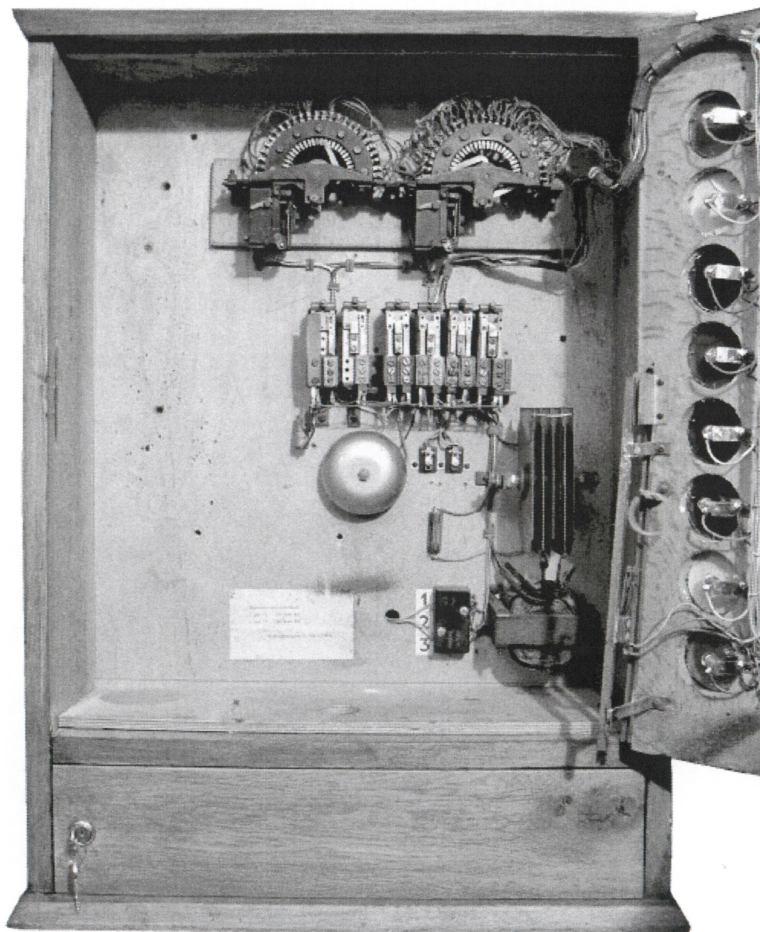
The prizes, which in my case are Polo mints, fit nicely into the delivery stack on the rear of the front door. From the front, the Polos sit temptingly in view surrounded by a frame of small mirrored tiles. This tempting display is lit by a small 15w bulb that sits above and just out of sight of the window. How could anyone resist the chance of winning a packet of sweets for just one penny? After all, you only need to get a matching pair of coloured lights to win, sounds simple doesn't it?

Well what looks like a random selection of lights, is actually very cleverly governed by the right hand uniselector at the top of the control panel, and the odds are firmly fixed in the operator's favour. That said, the player would never know this and always put a win down to his or her skill at pushing the stop button at just the right time.

If I were to guess at the date of manufacture, I would go for the early 1950s when a lot of operators took advantage of the fact that in 1953 sweets finally came off the ration after the end of WWII. It is possible that the date could be a little earlier, as the Government had tried to end sweet rationing in 1949. However, this was a disaster as the sweet manufacturers were not ready and could not keep up with the demand, so sweet rationing was re-introduced after a few weeks. Other clues to its date are the all-brass door furniture; the later Rotolite machines had Perspex and chrome fittings.



On the back of the door you can see the 'sweet' payout mechanism; this is the same type of mechanism that was used on Jamieson's **Shoot** pinball machine. This mechanism is a lovely piece of engineering and is almost silent in operation, with no loud thuds as the solenoid delivers the prize; it is also impossible to accidentally deliver more than one packet at a time, which can happen with some other delivery methods.



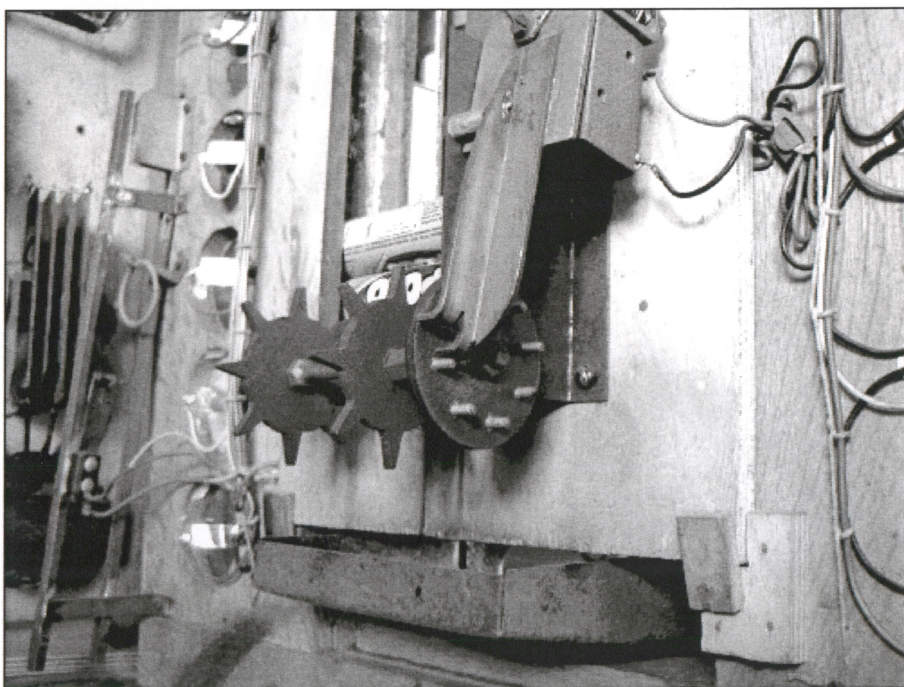
The usual layout in British electro-mechanical wall machines, with the ubiquitous GPO uniselectors and relays.

On a win the solenoid arm is pulled in, which turns the paddlewheel that is holding back the sweets clockwise through 45 degrees, and is then stopped by a second lug on the solenoid arm. When the solenoid arm returns to its rest position, the paddlewheel turns another 45 degrees clockwise and the prize drops into the payout cup. All this happens in a split second.

As to the control panel and its wiring? This is much the same as the standard Rotolite and the rest of the machines in this series, made up from a set of ex GPO relays and uniselectors, with a bell to announce a winning combination of lights.

As you would expect, the grandkids love it. After all, there is no sweet rationing at Granddad's house!!!

Stuart Dale



Detail of the sweet payout mechanism.

More 1960s Memories

By Robert Rowland

Funland in Mablethorpe was the second largest amusement arcade in town and was a very popular place for me. As you walked into Funland using the front entrance, you could see side stalls situated along the left-hand side of the arcade. These stalls had various games, including regulation darts, archery, tin-can alley, rifle range etc. There was even a Gypsy Lee fortune telling booth.

These stalls were great – it was the stall holders that were the problem. Almost all of these people seemed to have something against me and my best friend Divs, and they all took it upon themselves to keep sending us both out. One particular woman on the stalls, who was Scottish, for no apparent reason really had it in for the two of us.



The moment we stepped into Funland via the front entrance, she would yell out at the top of her voice “Hoot”. She must have had a fixed radar on that entrance. We eventually got the better of her by simply entering Funland via the back entrance and making sure we went nowhere near those side stalls.

There was a café at the back end of Funland, which was very popular with the stall holders. They would make their way there during the day for cups of tea or coffee, or maybe even something to eat. One day I was in the arcade by myself and old Gypsy Lee passed me. She gave me such a stare that made me feel so scared, and at the time I felt sure that she had put a curse on me. After that incident, if I noticed her heading in my direction, I would take a sharp detour to make certain I avoided her. The best time was when Funland got really busy and the stalls had plenty of punters; the staff seemed to rapidly lose interest in us both then.

We seemed to be avoiding attendants or members of staff a lot of the time in all the amusement arcades. The only time I ever felt safe from these people was when my mother was with me. All these same faces still saw me and not one of them dared say a word. How frustrating that must have been for them – I remember looking at them and thinking I had put one over on them. Luckily for me, mother did manage to go round the arcades with me whenever possible.

I must mention one of the stall holders in Funland, whose name was Ethel. I think she was Gypsy Lee’s sister, and she was okay. She had the Laughing Clowns stall, where you fed five balls into a moving clown’s mouth, and the scores from all five balls were added up and certain scores won a prize. The prizes were nothing to shout about and it didn’t interest me, but Ethel was a nice lady and she never threw me out.

She was still there in the late 1970s and I got talking to her one day. It just happened to be Derby day and she was telling me she had backed the winner. She then said she always picked the winner. Being a betting man myself at the time, I was amazed as Derby winners are not easy to predict. A week later I found out from a third party that Ethel used to bet 10p on every horse in the Derby, every year! So of course she would always pick the winner. Ethel is no longer with us, but I shall always remember her as the stall holder in Funland who was OK.

These were really great days and I do miss them so much. There will be more of my 1960s arcade memories next month.

Robert Rowland

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Jamieson Skill Poker, circa 1975. Sold as not working. Lights up but game play not correct. Control board is 7400 series TTL logic chips, so a background in electronics may be needed to fix. Would like it to go to someone who has a chance of fixing it. Open to offers.

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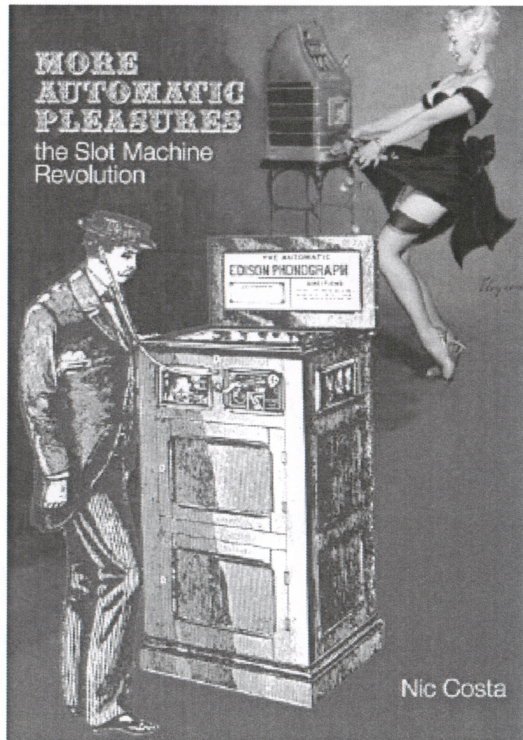
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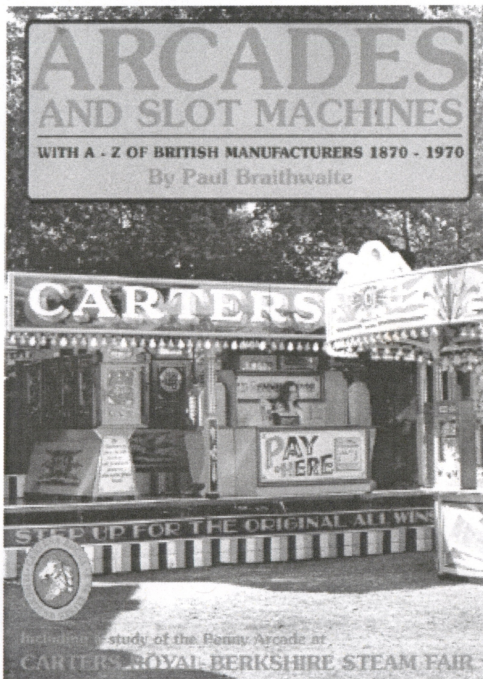
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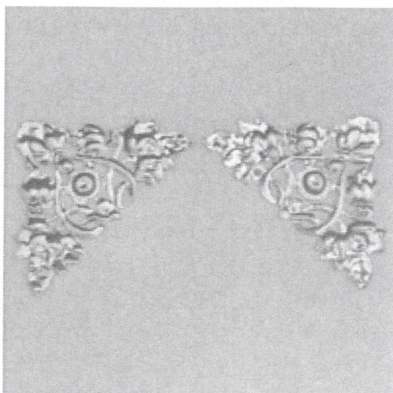
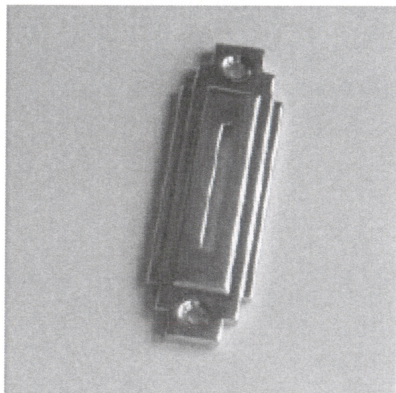
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